

O 080922Z JUN 09  
FM AMEMBASSY JAKARTA  
TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 2495  
INFO ASEAN REGIONAL FORUM COLLECTIVE PRIORITY  
AMEMBASSY PORT MORESBY PRIORITY  
DIA WASHINGTON DC  
CIA WASHDC  
USPACOM HONOLULU HI  
NSC WASHDC

C O N F I D E N T I A L JAKARTA 000973

DEPT FOR EAP, EAP/MTS, EAP/MLS, EAP/RSP, EAP/ANP  
NSC FOR E.PHU

E.O. 12958: DECL: 06/08/2019

TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PINS](#) [ID](#)

SUBJECT: PAPUA -- GOI RETAKES AIRSTRIP FROM  
SEPARATIST-LINKED GROUP

REF: JAKARTA 876

Classified By: Pol/C Joseph L. Novak, reasons 1.4(b+d).

[¶1.](#) (C) SUMMARY: Indonesian authorities have retaken a remote airstrip located in the rugged highlands of Papua in eastern Indonesia. The police action brings to an end a three-week standoff with anti-Jakarta Papuans. Two Papuans and one local official were killed in the incident; several police were badly wounded. The GOI had tried to end the standoff peacefully over the course of the past several weeks. The incident highlights ongoing tensions in the Papua region. END SUMMARY.

#### POLICE RETAKE AIRSTRIP

[¶2.](#) (U) A standoff has ended in the Papuan region. Three people were killed when units of Indonesia's elite anti-terror police stormed a small airstrip located in the Memberamo Raya district of the Papuan highlands in the early hours of June 6. Police launched the raid after negotiations failed to put an end to the occupation of the airfield. The incident began on May 17 when Papuans seized the airstrip which is located approximately 180 miles from the provincial capital of Jayapura (see reftel). The dead included two members of the Papuan group and one local official, media reported. Four police were seriously injured after coming under fire by bows and arrows. Some Papuans were reportedly captured during the police action.

[¶3.](#) (U) The Papua police chief said the group was led by a deserter from the Indonesian military, Decky Imbiri, and comprised of members of a traditional, indigenous religious movement. The sect, Mandar Makeri, believes the messiah will arrive only if the Papuans first fight against the Indonesian government. The group was apparently not directly associated with the underground separatist Free Papua Movement (OPM), as originally reported, although it did share some of OPM's anti-Jakarta views. It was not clear what the group's demands were in taking over the airstrip.

#### GOI TRIES RESTRAINT FIRST

[¶4.](#) (C) The GOI tried to end the standoff peacefully. Contacts told us that the highest levels of the Indonesian government urged the police to exercise maximize restraint in handling the matter. Underscoring the importance of finding a peaceful resolution, Coordinating Minister for Political, Legal, and Security Affairs Widodo (one name only) traveled to Papua to personally oversee the situation. Widodo coordinated closely with Indonesian President Yudhoyono, providing daily updates and reports on the situation.

[¶5.](#) (C) Agus Sumule, political advisor to Papua Governor Barnabas Suebu, praised police actions since the beginning of the standoff. To minimize tensions, Sumule noted that police enlisted the help of Papuan religious and community leaders

in hopes of bringing about a peaceful resolution. Sumule asserted that it was the Papuan group which rejected all peaceful means to end the standoff.

#### ONGOING TENSIONS IN PAPUA

¶6. (C) The incident highlights ongoing tensions in the Papuan region. The situation has become a bit more heated in the past several months and several violent incidents took place right before the national legislative elections in April. The GOI, in general, appears to be acting with some restraint despite the provocations which include attacks by armed elements (in Papua, this often means bows and arrows).

¶7. (C) That said, the Indonesian government will have to re-double its efforts to ensure the full implementation of autonomy provisions for Papua. Many Papuans complain that the government is dragging its feet and not doing enough to give Papuans forms of self-rule. Despite the various incidents, Indonesian control of the region seems secure, with anti-Jakarta dissenters small in number, poorly armed and poorly organized at this point. President Yudhoyono, in fact, plans to hold a mass rally in Papua later this month to kick off his re-election campaign.

#### NORTH